

the guardian weekly

February 2012

Level » Advanced

Style » Individual or group activities



Welcome to the Guardian Weekly's special news-based materials to support learners and teachers of English. Each month, the Guardian Weekly newspaper selects topical news articles that can be used to practise English language skills. The materials are graded for two levels: Advanced and Lower Intermediate. These worksheets can be downloaded free from guardian.co.uk/weekly/. You can also find more advice for teachers and learners from the Guardian Weekly's Learning English section on the site.

Materials prepared by Janet Hardy-Gould

New Zealand sees no justice in unusual babies' names



Law avoids confusion over judges' titles Shaun Curry/Getty Images

Before reading

- 1 The article is about babies' names. Read the questions below. Write two more questions to ask a partner about their name or their opinions about names. Then work in pairs to ask and answer the questions.

- a Why were you given your first name?
- b What would you choose as an alternative first name for yourself? Why?
- c Do you have a nickname? Who calls you this? Why?

- 2 Verbs from the article. Match the verbs to the synonyms.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| a <input type="checkbox"/> to ban | 1 to break (a rule) |
| b <input type="checkbox"/> to block | 2 to allow |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> to breach | 3 to forbid officially |
| d <input type="checkbox"/> to opt for | 4 to stop or prevent |
| e <input type="checkbox"/> to permit | 5 to refuse |
| f <input type="checkbox"/> to register | 6 to choose or select |
| g <input type="checkbox"/> to turn down | 7 to record officially |

What aspect of naming babies do you think the article is about?

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Article

New Zealand sees no justice in unusual babies' names

- 1 You can perhaps understand why officials in New Zealand might think that naming a newborn baby Lucifer is not giving it the best start in life. But why, as new statistics show, did they prevent 49 sets of parents from calling their child Justice, a popular name in parts of Africa?
- 2 Justice was the name most often turned down by New Zealand registrars in the 10 years to last June, the country's department for internal affairs said. Next on the list came Princess, with 24 refusals, King (21) and Prince (20).
- 3 Under New Zealand law babies' names cannot be offensive, too long - 100 characters is the limit - or contain religious references, which put paid to six planned little Lucifers. They are also not allowed to be self-declared titles, a clause which accounted for the Justices, in case they were mistaken for real judges or royalty. The rule also covers spelling variants, meaning Justus and Jutzice were also blocked.
- 4 The other rule breached in the top 10 was that on single-letter names - six parents chose J.
- 5 Further down the list, which was released alongside a roundup of most popular registered children's names during 2011 - Liam for boys, Ruby for girls - the ideas become even more unexpected.
- 6 Three parents chose Messiah, six lots of Roman numeral fans tried I, II or III, while one each opted for an asterisk symbol, a full stop and a "/" symbol.
- 7 Ross McPherson, deputy registrar general for the internal affairs department, said no specific names were banned, even if officials might feel they are potentially embarrassing for the child.
- 8 "In general terms, people can register whatever names they like for their children. However, some rules do apply," McPherson said.
- 9 Some parents, it seems, are devising ever-more cunning ways to express their views. Despite debate over whether it should be permitted, 84 babies were registered last year as Nevaeh, or heaven spelled in reverse, making it the 45th most popular girls' name.
- 10 The issue of unusual names created headlines in 2008 when a New Zealand judge placed a nine-year-old girl in court guardianship so she could change her name from Talula Does the Hula From Hawaii. The court heard how the girl told people her name was K to avoid being teased.

Peter Walker

Glossary

Lucifer (noun) a name for the devil

registrar (noun) a person whose job is to keep official records, especially of births, marriages and deaths

put paid to (expression) to end or destroy a plan, hope or idea

roundup (noun) a summary of the most important points of a particular subject

guardianship (noun) the state or position of being responsible for a child

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While reading

- 1 Read the sentences below. Which ones do you think are correct (put a tick in the box)? Read the article to check your ideas.

In New Zealand, officials have banned babies' names which...

- a ☐ could offend people.
- b ☐ are more than 100 characters long.
- c ☐ are incorrectly spelt.
- d ☐ refer to religion.
- e ☐ consist of only one or two letters.
- f ☐ are Roman numerals.
- g ☐ are a only symbol.
- h ☐ might embarrass the child one day.
- i ☐ are religious names spelt backwards.

- 2 Read the article again. Complete the questions with the correct word, then find the answers. how, how many, what, when, who, why

- a times has the name Justice been refused in the last decade?

- b were the four most commonly rejected names?

- c are names like Princess refused?

- d were Liam and Ruby the most chosen names?

- e have some parents succeed in giving their children banned names?

- f helped a child in 2008? How?

After reading

- 1 The possessive 's

Look at these examples from the article. What are the rules for the position of the apostrophe?

... the **country's** department for internal affairs said. (paragraph 2)

Under New Zealand law **babies'** names cannot be offensive. (paragraph 3)

... a roundup of most popular **children's** names ... (paragraph 5)

Read the text below. Put in apostrophes where necessary.

Charles Hall was one of the longest-serving employees in New Zealands department for internal affairs. He had run one of its main registry offices in Auckland for over 30 years although he was planning to retire in two years time.

When he opened the doors that morning, there was already a queue of parents. He always followed the same procedures - he wrote down both of the parents names followed by the childs name or in the case of twins, the childrens names.

One of his first visitors was the father of twins who wanted to register his sons names. "We want to call our boys Freedom and Justice," he said.

Charles took two deep breaths and began to explain why Justices name was prohibited. "It's all in a mornings work," he thought to himself.

- 2 Verb patterns

Look at this example from the article.

But why ... did they prevent 49 sets of parents from **calling** their child Justice?

Write sentences about naming children in your country. Use the - ing form or the infinitive with to.

- a The government has banned parents from ...

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b Parents are allowed ...

--

c Officials sometimes prevent people from ...

--

d Some families choose ...

--

e Most people avoid ...

f Many younger parents want ...

Compare your sentences with a partner.

Activity - discussion

Read the questions below and make notes. Work in small groups to discuss your ideas.

a Is it acceptable for the government to tell people what to call their children?

b Do you think children suffer if they have an unusual name?

c Can having an unusual name be an advantage?

d What factors do parents consider when naming a child? Which ones do you think are the most important?

Answers

Before reading

Before reading
2a3b4c1d6e2f7g5

While reading

1a, b, d, f, g

2a How many; 49

b What; Justice, Princess, King and Prince.

c Why: Because it is a title and the person could be mistaken for royalty, a judge etc.

d When; In 2011.

e How; By spelling them backwards.

fWho; A judge. By placing her in court guardianship to change her name.

Notes

[illegible]

After reading

1 Rules: singular noun + 's, plural noun + 's, irregular plural + 's. New Zealand's, two years' time, parents' names, child's name, children's names, sons' names, Justice's name, morning's work.

2 Example answers: a calling their children religious names.

b to call their children a wide range of names.

c using offensive names.

d to use a traditional family name.

e giving their son or daughter a very long name.

f to call their children modern names.